माँ के

हाथ का*

Sohum Gupta

*Maa Ke Haathka

To your maa, without whom this book would not exist,
and to my maa, without whom I would not exist.

Memory is fickle. This much is for certain — while events and experiences may remain static, stuck in time, the way we remember them is fluid and flexible, colored and recolored by what we're told, what we imagine, and even just by what makes for a good story. I don't remember going to Disney World as a child, but I've seen a picture of me walking around the park, and I've co-opted that memory as my own.

I started this project in May. When you and Dad went to India, I'd sit down with Nani each day and force her to recite her recipes for me. It took a little pushing and prodding ("माँ को सब कछु पता है" or "वह तो मझुसे अचछा खाना बनाती है"), but I was able to collect more than 50 recipes from her — recipes from your childhood.

If there is anything I've learned over these past six months, whether through talking to Nani or cooking her recipes, it is that if memory is fickle, then so is food. The same ways that your memories are reconstructed and tweaked each time you recall them, dishes change and evolve over time — a little less garam masala, a little more garlic and onion — and the originals fade into the past. This sort of evolution is not a bad thing — otherwise, we'd all be eating berries and raw meat — but I think it's important to preserve the steps of the process.

This is an attempt to do just that. It's a snapshot of homestyle Indian cooking at a specific moment in time, in a specific household, from the hands of a specific person. For anyone else, this book is just a collection of recipes that epitomizes simple, necessity-driven, and delicious North Indian cuisine as it existed half a century ago. Hopefully, for you, this is more than that — a painting of your childhood, a symbol of your mother, and a resource to lean on when you're feeling nostalgic.

I know firsthand that a lot of these recipes are not the way you make food now — and that the ones that are, you already know how to make — but I also know that if food is fickle, then so is it cyclical. One day, you might want to eat panjiri made the way that you remember as a child, and there may be no one to ask. Maybe you'll find this somewhere in the house, and see if you can recreate it.

To that end, I think of this cookbook as a bridge — between languages, palettes, and generations. I tried to reflect that hybridity in the design of the book, mixing Hindi and English, giving instructions for pressure cookers and stoves, using frozen ingredients where I couldn't find fresh, and so on. While it was a precarious path for me, you are uniquely poised to walk along this bridge, to understand what "one whistle on simmer" means and to know what a "1/2 teaspoon" is — and even to catch any mistakes or weird decisions I might have made.

In the spirit of bridges and collaboration, I want to take this chance to thank those who helped with this project: everyone who tasted the recipes that I made, for helping me get through some of the neverending leftovers in my fridge; Bobby Mama, for helping tease recipes and stories out of Nani; Bhaiya and Sreyashi, for helping with ideating, testing recipes, proofreading, and general support throughout the process (as well as financial support!); and finally, Nani, for trusting me with her recipes and her voice. Hopefully, you can feel the hands, mouths, and care that went into this.

With love,
Sohum

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One for You, One For Me

I spent a long time thinking about how exactly to include the recipes in this book. My first instinct was to treat it like a marketable, publishable cookbook; that is, to prioritize clarity, accessibility, and preciseness in the recipes. When I tested each dish, I took measurements, noted down times, and concretized steps — everything I could do to make sure that anyone picking up the cookbook for the first time could make a recipe from it, and make it well.

Yet there's something cold, even clinical, about that. To turn your grandmother's recipes into a set of instructions is to risk losing what ties you to the food in the first place. When Nani told me her recipes, she began from a place of shared understanding, a communal pool of knowledge and instinct that was naturally passed down by eating and being around the same food for our whole lives. Sometimes this went awry — I only realized halfway through, for example, that nearly every sabji should start with a chhonk of hing and jeera. However, it also meant that the recipes were not only given to me, but were *entrusted* to me. If the instructions Nani gave me were vague, that was not a product of exclusivity, but rather one of confidence: that, given a general structure, I was fluent enough in her food to figure it out myself. If Nani believes in that level of fluency from me, then I can only imagine what she thinks of yours.

To that end, each recipe in this book is actually two recipes — one for you, one for me. The one for you — the printed one — is straight-to-the-point. If you need a reminder of which masalas go in patra, you don't need to be told how much besan to use — I get that. This recipe is rough, sure, but it's also confident and self-assured. I hope it evokes Nani's voice, her heavy hand with salt, and images of her in front of the stove.

The other recipe — the notes scrawled in the margins — is for me. The palak paneer I made for this book was one of the only times in my life I've ever liked that dish, and I'd like to know exactly how to make it again, down to the 1/2 teaspoon. It's precise, sure, but it's also amateurish and uninformed. If the first recipe is emblematic of Nani's style of cooking, then I hope that this one represents mine: think labeled glass jars of spices, measuring cups, and photos in our family group chat.

On Masalas

This goes without saying, but the amounts for all the masalas in this book are more of a guideline than anything else — a suggestion, even. Really, all the masalas should be to taste, which is how I determined them when making the dishes for myself. It's also helpful to note that I was quite heavy-handed with the masalas, especially the lal mirch and namak. You may want to start with half, and add more to taste. Note, however, that while the amounts are up to personal taste, *which* masalas to include are not. Of course, there is some flexibility there — even Nani said she sometimes adds garam masala to recipes when they don't need it.

On Fats

Nani's rules for fat are quite simple — unless otherwise specified, sukhi sabjis are cooked in mustard oil, and rase ke sabjis are cooked in ghee. I followed those rules closely, only opting for neutral oils when frying or for other special cases. I found it essential — the savory bite of bhindi and the rich mouthfeel of a simple tomato gravy rely on the respective fats they are cooked in. I know you're used to cooking in canola oil nowadays (or whatever mixture is in the steel bottle on the counter), but I'd urge you to be more intentional with your fats. It truly is worth it.

कॉन्टेन्ट्स*

I tried to hit all of the types of food that Nani used to cook for you growing up. It's not a complete collection — I'm sure there are several recipes that Nani forgot to mention or that I forgot to ask about — but I hope that it contains the most memorable ones. These categories aren't strict, and they may be blurry around the edges, but after all, it's hard to contain a life's worth of cooking and eating into nine sections.

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सूखी सब्जी*

If there are two things that are the most important to note for this section, they are mustard oil and khattai. The latter, of course, is still an oft-used part of your larder. As for the former, however, I know you've moved away from it. Perhaps it's because Bhaiya and I used to complain about the smell (and it getting in our clothes), but we're out of the house now, so it doesn't matter. Try making these as Nani used to, and see if you enjoy them more.

* Sukhi Sabji

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आलू मेथी* → makes 2-3 servings

I feel like you don't make this very often, even though Nani seems to think you quite like it. I was surprised how much it was unlike other dry aloo sabjis — I think the combination of the waxy baby potatoes and the methi drives it into a different direction. The methi imparts its earthy flavor to the aloo, of course, but I think the way it crisps up is my favorite part of this — it almost looks like dried seaweed to me.

- Methi → 1 bunch, stems removed
- Baby potatoes → 8-10
- Mustard oil → 2 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Khattai → ½ tsp

Wash the methi and thinly slice.

depending on size ← Optionally peel potatoes, and then cut them into half or wedges.

until wilted, 3-5 mins. ← Heat mustard oil and temper with hing, then add methi and saute.

8-10 mins., until potatoes start to brown ← Add the potatoes and masalas (namak, haldi, and lal mirch), and saute for a while.

~20 mins. ← Cover and cook until the potatoes are cooked through.

Uncover and saute for a few minutes longer, then add khattai.

—

Covering the pan too early will cause the methi to go bitter.

*Aloo Methi

टिंडे* → makes 2-3 servings

This is another one of your favorites, according to Nani, and one that I was dreading to make. To be honest, I don't think I knew what tinda was — and even after making it, I'm still not sure I know now. Regardless, I didn't mind this. I don't think it'll join my regular rotation, but I honestly found it fun to cook — there was something satisfying about the way that the tinda peeled and cooked down and crisped up.

- Tinda → 2, large
- Mustard oil → 2 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Khattai → ½ tsp

Peel the tinda, and cut into thin wedges.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

5-7 mins. ← Add the tinda and masalas (namak, lal mirch, and haldi), and saute.

10-15 mins. ← Cover and cook until par-cooked.

10-15 mins. ← Uncover, and saute until crisp.

Add khattai before serving.

*Tinde

बीन्स* → makes 2-3 servings

- Beans → ~16 oz.
- Mustard oil → 2 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → 1/2 tsp
- Namak → 1/2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1/2 tsp
- Haldi → 1/2 tsp
- Garam masala → 1/2 tsp
- Khattai → 1/2 tsp

Wash the beans, and cut into small pieces.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

3-5 mins. ← Add the beans and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, and garam masala), and saute a bit.

10-15 mins. ← Cover the pan and cook on low heat until softened.

Add khattai at the end.

*Beans

करोंदा* → makes 3-4 servings?

- Karonda → 8 oz.?
- Mustard oil → 1-2 tbsp?
- Hing → 1 puff?
- Jeera → ½ tsp?
- Namak → ½ tsp?
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp?
- Haldi → ¼ tsp?
- Saunf → ¼ tsp?
- Gur → 1-2 tsp?

couldn't make this, didn't find karonda anywhere :(

Wash the karonda and cut in half, removing the seeds.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

Add the karonda and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, and saunf), and saute until softened.

Add gur at the end.

*Karonda

तोरी* → makes 1-2 servings

I wanted to like this — I really did. Nani said that this was one of your favorites growing up, and I kept an open mind, but it just isn't for me. I also didn't realize just how much it would shrink down — I bought a medium-sized tori, expecting it to make far too much sabji, but I was left with barely a quarter cup. Maybe I will try it again someday, but until then I will leave the tori for you to enjoy.

- Tori → 2 medium
- Mustard oil → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp

~½-inch cubes ← Peel the tori and cut into cubes.

Heat the mustard oil, and temper with hing and jeera.

Add cubed tori, masalas (namak, lal mirch, and haldi), and a bit of
~1 tbsp ← water.

~10-15 mins. ← Cover and cook until soft — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle.

*Tori

भिंडी* → makes ~2 servings

You know that I'm not a huge bhindi fan, but this one is classic, crispy and well-spiced while still being balanced. As in the rest of the sukhi sabjis, the mustard oil is key here, and the generous amount of fat is especially necessary to keep the bhindi from getting slimy. Making sure the bhindi is dry is also important, as it ensures that it fries in the pan rather than steaming and getting soft.

- Bhindi → ~12 oz.
- Mustard oil → 2-3 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Dhaniya → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp
- Khattai → ½ tsp

Wash bhindi and dry well, then cut lengthwise.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

Add the bhindi and masalas (namak, lal mirch, dhaniya, haldi, and garam masala), and saute. ← until browned and cooked through, ~ 10 mins.

Add khattai at the end.

*Bhindi

कटहल* → makes 3-4 servings

I always wondered why you see jackfruit at the Indian grocery stores and why we never cook it in the house, but I guess Nani did used to cook it. The kathal here is a good pairing with the aloo, being similarly satisfying but providing a textural contrast, one that's tender and chewy rather than just starchy. Unfortunately, I could only find frozen raw jackfruit, but I imagine it would be even better fresh.

- Jackfruit, raw → ~8 oz.
- Potatoes → 2 medium
- Mustard oil → 3-4 tbsp
- Hing → 2 puffs
- Jeera → 1 tsp
- Namak → 1 ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Dhaniya → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ½ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp
- Khattai → ½ tsp

Peel and cut the potatoes and kathal into medium sized pieces, setting aside the khattal seeds.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing & jeera.

5-7 mins. ← Add the kathal, kathal seeds, potatoes, and masalas (namak, lal mirch, dhaniya, haldi, and garam masala), and saute a bit.

15-20 mins. ← Cover and cook, adding splashes of water if necessary, until cooked through.

Add khattai at the end.

*Kathal

आलू गोभी* → makes 3-4 servings

- Potatoes → 2-3 medium
- Cauliflower → ½ medium head
- Mustard oil → 2 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Namak → ¾ tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tsp
- Dhaniya → 1 tsp
- Haldi → ½ tsp
- Garam masala → ½ tsp
- Khattai → 1 tsp

*Aloo Gobi

Peel potatoes, then cut potatoes and cauliflower into medium pieces.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

Add potatoes, cauliflower, and masalas (namak, lal mirch, dhaniya, haldi, and garam masala), and saute.

5-7 mins., to get a bit of color ←

20-25 mins., adding splashes of water to prevent burning ← Cover and cook until soft.

Add khattai at the end.

आलू गाजर* → makes 3-4 servings

- Carrots → 3-4 medium
- Potatoes → 2 medium
- Mustard oil → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 2 puffs
- Jeera → 1 tsp
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Haldi → ½ tsp
- Dhaniya → ½ tsp
- Khattai → 1 tsp

*Aloo Gajar

Peel the carrots and potatoes, and cut carrots into thin rounds and potatoes into medium pieces.

Heat mustard oil, and temper with hing and jeera.

15-20 mins., covering if needed to soften aloo ← Add potatoes, carrots, and masalas (namak, haldi, and dhaniya), then fry until cooked through.

Add khattai at the end.

भुना आलू* → makes 2-3 servings

- Potatoes → 2-3 medium
- Namak → 1 ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp
- Khattai → 1 tsp
- Mustard oil → 2-3 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → 1-2 tsp
- Dhaniya → 1 tsp

* Bhuna Aloo

Boil the potatoes and let cool, then peel and break into medium pieces by hand.

Add masalas (namak, lal mirch, and garam masala) to the crushed potatoes and mix well.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing, jeera, and dhaniya.

10-15 mins, until browned but moist← Add the potatoes and saute.

बेसन आलू* → makes 2-3 servings

- Baby potatoes → 8-10
- Mustard oil → 2-3 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Besan → 4 tbsp
- Namak → 1 ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Dhaniya → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp

* Besan Aloo

Boil baby potatoes, then let cool and peel.

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

Add besan and roast until lightly brown.

Add potatoes and masalas, and fry for a few minutes, then add water, and boil for ~15 minutes.

रसे की सब्जी*

Several of the recipes in this section rely on a tomato gravy — the same way that many of yours do as well. However, Nani's tomato gravy is simple and fresh: no onion, no garlic, no ginger. It's just a chhonk and blended tomatoes, which cook down to make a gravy that has acidity and a mellow sweetness, both of which balance out the masalas in the dishes. Speaking of masalas, feel free to be more liberal with them here — these dishes can take it.

* Rase Ke Sabji

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घिया के कोफ्ते* → makes 3-4 servings

This sabji feels a little bit like slipping vegetables into your kids' mac and cheese — if you don't know there's ghiya in it, you would never be able to guess. Honestly, these kofte are delicious — soft on the inside, but perfectly crispy and light on the outside. Once I was able to forget that they were made of ghiya, I thoroughly enjoyed this — though it's best the day it's made, while the kofte still have some structure to them.

Kofte
- Ghiya (Bottle gourd) → ½ medium
- Besan → ½ - ¾ cup
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp

Gravy
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Tomatoes → 2 medium, blended or grated
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Garam Masala → ½ tsp

Kofte

should be like a thick batter ← Peel and grate the ghiya, then mix with besan and masalas (namak and lal mirch).

5-7 mins. ← Form into pakodas, and fry until golden brown.

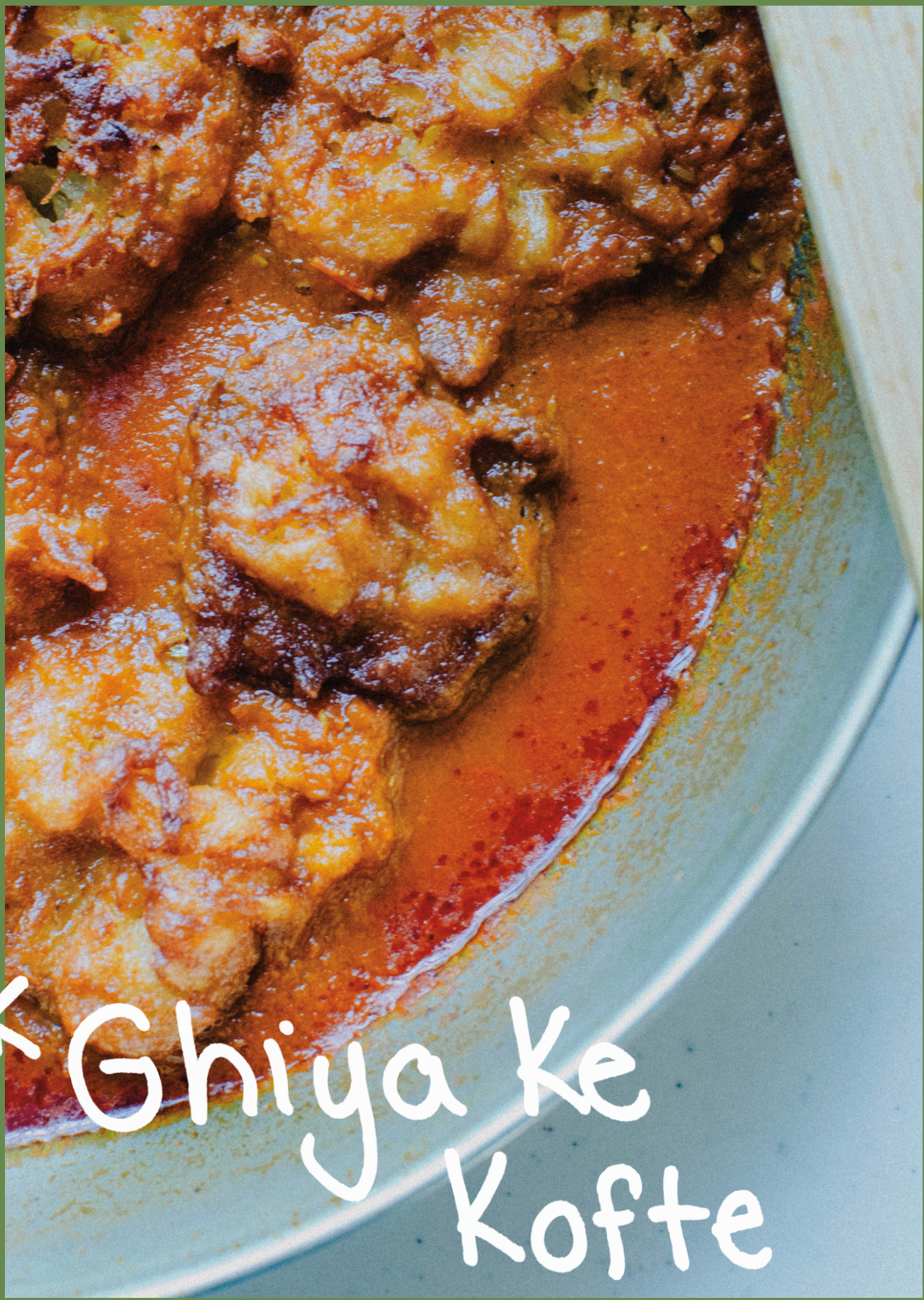
Gravy

Heat the ghee, and temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, and dhaniya) and fry until thickened.

~1-2 cups water, and simmer for 10-15 mins. ← Add some water, then bring to boil and simmer until the gravy is thickened.

Add the kofte ~5 minutes before serving.



*Ghiya Ke Kofte

जिमीकंद* → makes 3-4 servings

I had never heard of jimikand, and it took me a while to even find it in the Indian store — I eventually found it frozen, and labeled "Suran". To be honest, it kind of reminds me of the yam in Ghana, and in that sense, this recipe makes a lot of sense — it's basically an aloo sabji, but switching out some of the aloo for another similar starch. I'm not sure if I completely enjoyed the texture of the jimikand here, but I imagine it's better fresh.

- Jimikand → ~8 oz.
- Potatoes → 1-2 medium
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Tomatoes → 2 medium, blended or grated
- Namak → 1½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Dhaniya → ½ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp

Peel and cut the jimikand into small pieces, and peel and cut the potatoes into medium pieces.

5-7 mins. ← Deep fry potatoes and jimikand.

Heat the ghee, and temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, and dhaniya) and fry until thickened.

~1-2 cups water ← Add the jimikand and potatoes, along with some water, then bring to a boil.

~10-15 mins. ← Cover, then simmer until the jimikand and potatoes are cooked through — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle.

* Jimikand

कमल ककड़ी* → makes 3-4 servings

The more I made these recipes, the more the structure started to stick out. Obviously, there are repeated elements, but even more than that, you can see the way that taste and variety is balanced with satiety and value — the kamal kakri providing the former and the aloo backing up the latter. It works — even though this is a relatively standard sabji, the kamal kakri is delicate and beautiful, making it feel elegant.

- Kamal kakri → ~8 oz.
- Potatoes → 1-2 medium
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → 1/2 tsp
- Tomatoes → 2 medium, blended or grated
- Namak → 1 1/2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1/2 tsp
- Haldi → 1/4 tsp
- Dhaniya → 1/2 tsp

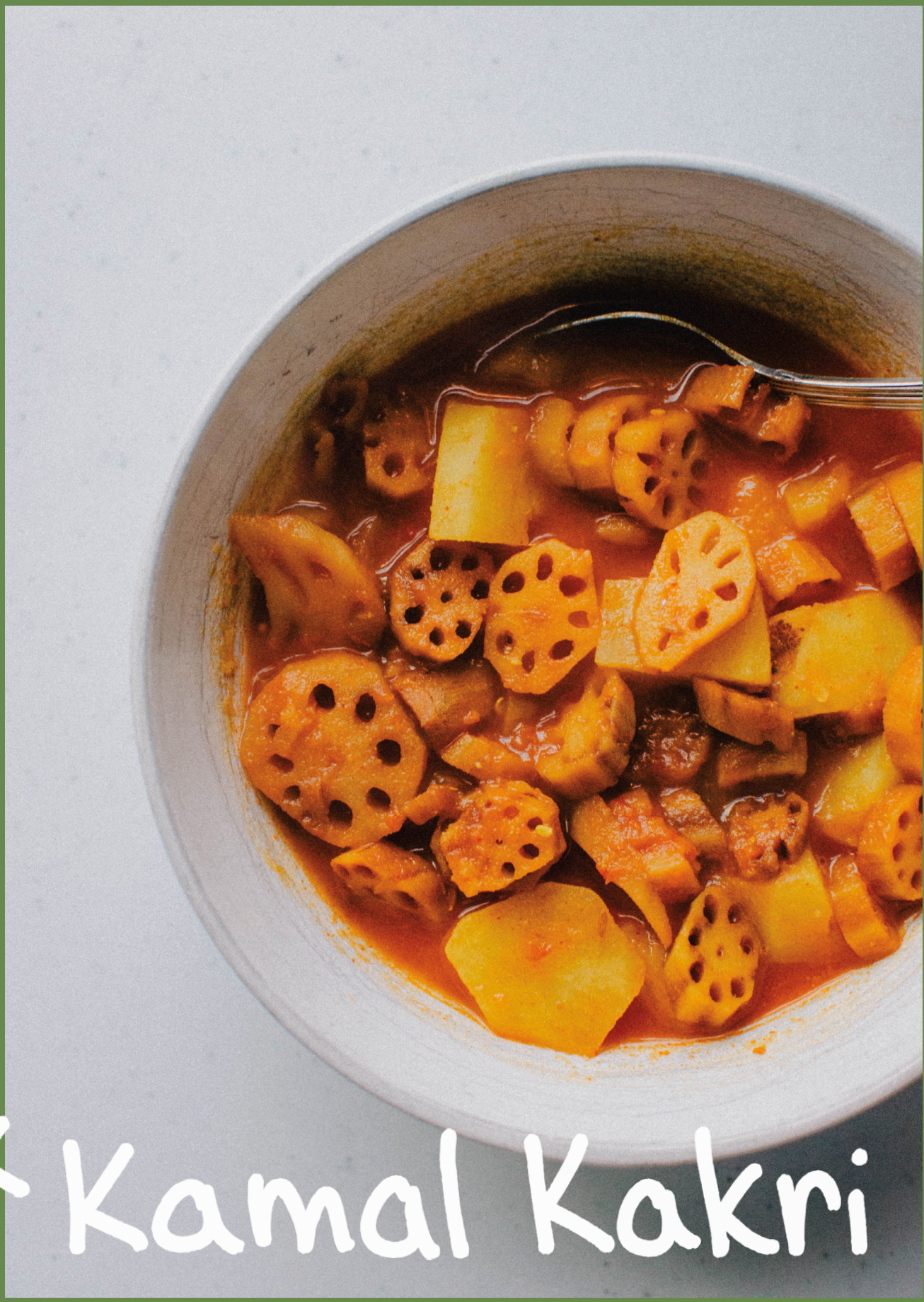
Peel and cut the kamal kakri into thin circles, and peel and cut the potatoes into medium pieces.

Heat the ghee, and temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, and dhaniya) and fry until thickened.

~1-2 cups water ← Add the kamal kakri and potatoes, along with some water, then bring to boil.

20-30 mins. ← Cover, then simmer until the kamal kakri and potatoes are cooked through — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle on high and two to three whistles on simmer.



*Kamal Kakri

सरसों का साग*

→ makes 3-4 servings

When I was at the Indian store, I quickly picked up sarson, but when I got home I realized that it was just broccoli rabe, which is very much not mustard greens. Coincidentally, someone gave me mustard greens from their garden the next morning, and I was able to find bathua around the farm. I'm glad, too, because this dish is only as good as the greens you use — the pepperiness and slight bitterness of the sarson define the dish and the other greens are backing characters, providing depth and complexity.

- Sarson → 2 bunches/heads
- Methi → ~1 bunch
- Palak → ~1/2 bunch, or 4-5 oz.
- Bathua → ~1/2 bunch
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1tsp

discarding tough stems ← Wash all your greens.

enough water to cover, 2-3 cups ← Add the greens to boiling water, along with the masalas (namak and lal mirch).

or until broken down and thickened ← Boil for about an hour.

*Sarson Ka Saag

पकौड़े की सब्जी* → makes 3-4 servings

Pakode
- Split moong dal (with skin) → ¼ cup
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp

Gravy
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Tomatoes → 2 medium, blended
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp

Pakode

Soak the moong dal overnight.

rub dal between your palms to separate skins ← Rinse the dal, removing skins, then drain and blend.

whisk to aerate ← Add namak and lal mirch to the batter.

8-10 mins. ← Shape into small pakodas and deep fry.

Gravy

Heat the ghee, and temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, and garam masala), and saute.

1-2 cups ← Add water and bring to a boil.

10-15 mins. ← Simmer until the gravy has thickened.

1-2 mins. ← Add pakodas and boil for a couple minutes.

*Pakode Ki Sabji

दम आलू* → makes 3-4 servings

- Baby potatoes → 14-16
- Ghee → ~3 tbsp
- Hing → 2 puffs
- Jeera → 1 tsp
- Tomatoes → 4 medium, blended or grated
- Namak → 2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tsp
- Haldi → 1 tsp
- Dhaniya → 1 ½ tsp
- Garam masala → 1 tsp

7-10 mins. ← Parboil the baby potatoes, then let cool and peel.

Shallow fry the potatoes until lightly browned.

Heat the ghee, and temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, dhaniya, garam masala), and fry well.

3-5 mins. ← Add the potatoes and saute for a bit.

add about 1-2 cups of water, and simmer for 15-20 mins. ← Add water, bring to a boil, and simmer until cooked — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle.

* Dum Aloo

आलू मटर* → makes 2-3 servings

- Potatoes → 2 medium
- Matar → ½ cup
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ½ tsp
- Tomatoes → 2 medium, blended or grated
- Namak → 1 ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Dhaniya → ½ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp

Heat ghee, then temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, dhaniya, and garam masala), and saute.

Peel the potatoes and cut into medium pieces, then add the potatoes and matar to the tomato gravy.

~1-2 cups, enough for a thin gravy ← Add water and bring to a boil.

~10-15 mins. ← Simmer until the gravy has thickened — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle on high and one whistle on simmer.

* Aloo Matar

मटर पनीर* → makes 2-3 servings

- Paneer → ~12 oz., cubed
- Matar → 1/2 cup
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → 1/2 tsp
- Tomatoes → 2 medium, blended or grated
- Namak → 1 1/2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1/2 tsp
- Haldi → 1/4 tsp
- Dhaniya → 1/2 tsp
- Garam masala → 1/4 tsp

Heat ghee, then temper with hing and jeera.

8-10 mins. ← Add the blended tomatoes and masalas (namak, lal mirch, haldi, dhaniya, and garam masala), and saute.

5-7 mins. ← Add the matar to the tomato gravy and saute.

~1-2 cups, enough for thin gravy ← Add the water and bring to a boil.

~10-15 mins. ← Simmer until the gravy has thickened — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle.

—

For a variation, replace the paneer with ~1 1/2 cups of makhane.

* Matar Paneer

दाल और कढ़ी*

Dal is perhaps one of the most comforting types of dishes — at least to me. It is the dish that is made in every North Indian household, and everyone has their favorite dal: arhar for me, moong for Bhaiya, and chana for you (if I'm remembering correctly). Nani seems to be in Bhaiya's camp, as two out of the three dal recipes here use moong, but the beauty of dal is in its flexibility — use what you have, what you want, and what you like.

* Dal aur Kadhi

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Khichdi 44
Dal Palak 46
Masoor Dal 47

कढ़ी* → makes 2-3 servings

A lot of the recipes I made for this book were quite simple, but this one humbled me. Honestly, it turned out good, but there's definitely a level of technique and intuition involved, one that I imagine can only come from practice. The pakode are finicky — either they're soft but have no structure, or they keep their shape but they're too hard. The final result, however, is comforting and cozy, and worth all the effort.

Besan Pakode
- Besan → 3/4 cup
- Namak → 1/2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1/2 tsp
- Garam masala → 1/4 tsp
- Water → 6-8 tbsp

Kadhi
- Sour dahi → 1 cup
- Besan → 2 tbsp
- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Methidana → 1/4 tsp
- Jeera → 1/2 tsp
- Rai → 1/2 tsp
- Ajwain → 1/4 tsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Namak → 1 1/2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1/2 tsp
- Haldi → 1/2 tsp

if batter is too thick, pakode will be hard - if a drop of batter floats in water, you're good

Besan Pakode

Mix besan and masalas, then add water to form a thick batter. ←

Deep fry small balls of batter until golden brown. ← 5-6 mins.

Kadhi

Add besan to the sour dahi, and mix well. ← no clumps!

Heat ghee, and temper with methidana, jeera, rai and ajwain.

Add the dahi mixture and lots of water. ← 3-4 cups

Add the masalas, and boil for a long time until the dahi separates and the kadhi thickens. ← 40-50 mins.

Add besan pakodas, and boil for 10 minutes.

*Kadhi

खिचड़ी* → makes 3-4 servings

You know I'm not a huge khichdi fan — I prefer my arhar dal and chawal. Putting it in the same category as a congee or rice porridge, though, it fits right in. Like those dishes, khichdi is not meant to be exciting or revolutionary — it's meant to be comforting, warming, filling, and incredibly simple to boot. It's unpretentious and versatile — Nani uses moong and masoor dal here, but I imagine you can use whatever you want.

- Rice → ½ cup
- Split moong dal (with skin) → ¼ cup
- Red masoor dal → ¼ cup
- Ghee → 1-2 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → 1 tsp
- Namak → 1 ½ tsp
- Haldi → ¼ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp

Combine the rice and both types of dal and rinse well.

Soak the rice and dal for 10 minutes.

Heat ghee, and temper with hing and jeera.

Add the masalas (namak, haldi, and garam masala) along with the rice and dal.

add ~4 cups of water, simmer for ~45 mins. ← Add water and boil until cooked through and porridge-like — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle on high and one whistle on simmer.

—

Feel free to adjust the water to reach your desired consistency.

*Khichdi

दाल पालक* → makes 4-5 servings

- Split moong dal (with skin) → 3/4 cup
- Spinach → 8 oz.
- Namak → 3 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1/2 tsp
- Haldi → 1 tsp

Wash the spinach and cut finely or into medium thin ribbons, as desired.

Rinse your dal well.

enough water to cover, adding more later, if necessary ← Combine the spinach with the dal, and add the masalas (namak, lal mirch, and haldi).

Add water, bring to boil, and let simmer for ~30 minutes.

* Dal Palak

मसूर दाल* → makes ~2 servings

- Kala masoor dal (whole) → ½ cup
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Haldi → ½ tsp
- Water → 2 ½ cup
- Ghee → ~1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ¼ tsp
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp

Soak the masoor dal for ~10 minutes, then rinse well.

Add the water and masalas, then bring to boil and simmer until cooked — or in a pressure cooker, cook for one whistle on high and two whistles on simmer.

~30 mins. ←

To make the chhonk, heat the ghee in a small saucepan and then add hing, jeera, and lal mirch.

Top the dal with the chhonk.

* Masoor Dal

परांठे*

Aloo Parantha is the dish that I ask you to make for me every time I come home. Fried until crisp, and eaten with a generous pat of butter, it is truly stomach-filling and soul-nourishing. Making these recipes reminded me of every time I landed in Chicago, made the drive home, dropped my bag on the floor, and had parantha for dinner. The only difference, of course, is that these are Nani's recipes — so fry them in ghee.

*Paranthe

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Namak Mirch Ajwain Parantha 55

आलू (& गोभी) परांठा*

↳ makes 3 paranthas

While a lot of the recipes in this book are different from how you make them, this one seems to be almost exactly the same. I'm glad, too, since, as you know, this is one of the meals that is most comforting to me. It may not be the most exciting or flashy dish, but there's something so beautiful about the fact that this simple, homely dish will make its way through generations unchanged, like a living, breathing family heirloom.

Dough
- Atta → 1 cup
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Water → ~⅓ cup

Aloo Filling
- Potatoes → 2 medium
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp

Variation: Gobi Filling
- Cauliflower → ¼ small head
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ¼ tsp

To make the dough, mix the atta and namak, and knead with water until smooth.

boil for ~30 mins. ← **Aloo Filling:** Boil potatoes and let cool, then peel and mash or grate. Add masalas and mix well.

Gobi Filling: Boil potatoes and let cool, then peel and mash or grate. Add masalas and mix well.

golf ball sized ← Divide dough into balls.

Roll out a dough ball, and add a scoop of the filling, then fold around the filling and pinch into a ball.

Flatten the ball and roll out again.

8-10 mins. ← Fry in ghee until golden brown.

*Aloo (& Gobi) Parantha

मक्का परांठा* → makes 3-4 paranthas

I've only had makka parantha a few times in my life, and I've never made it — and I sort of struggled. The dough kept wanting to crack and fall apart, but I was eventually able to get it to a workable consistency. This is definitely a finicky recipe — even if you get the dough right, you have to cook it perfectly, so it's cooked but not too dry. If it does end up too dry, sopping it up with sarson ka saag helps.

— Makki ka atta (corn flour) → 1 cup
— Namak → 1 tsp
— Water, warm → ½ - ½ cup

Mix namak and makka atta, then mix with warm water.

Knead well to form a dough.

if dough is cracking, add water ← Let rest for 5-7 minutes, then knead again.

Flour the countertop with more makka atta, then pinch out balls golf ball sized ← of dough.

Flatten the dough balls out between your hands.

Heat ghee in a pan, then place the flattened dough upside down onto the pan, using a cloth if necessary to brush off any extra flour.

5-7 mins., flipping gently ← Fry in ghee until golden.

—

Serve with sarson ka saag, aloo gajar, and chaaj for a traditional and complete meal.

* Makka Parantha

मेथी परांठा* → makes 3 paranthas

- Methi → ½ bunch, stems removed
- Atta → 1 cup
- Yogurt → 2 tbsp
- Water → ~¼ cup

Wash the methi well, then chop finely.

Mix the methi into the atta, then add the yogurt and water.

Mix to form a smooth, soft dough

golf ball sized← Divide dough into balls, then roll out.

~5-7 mins.← Fry in ghee until cooked through and lightly browned.

*Methi Parantha

नमक मिर्च अजवाइन परांठा* → makes 3 paranthas

Dough
– Atta → 1 cup
– Namak → ½ tsp
– Water → ~⅓ cup
Filling
– Namak → a few pinches
– Lal Mirch → a few pinches
– Ajwain → a few pinches
– Ghee → a few tsp

To make the dough, mix the atta and namak, and knead with water until smooth.

golf ball sized ← Divide dough into balls.

~1 tsp ghee ← Roll out a dough ball, then spread some ghee over the dough.

Sprinkle namak, lal mirch, and ajwain over the ghee.

Roll the dough up into a long snake, then coil into a spiral.

Flatten the ball and roll out again.

~8-10 mins. ← Fry in ghee until golden brown.

–

Serve with achaar and dahi or raita.

* Namak Mirch Ajwain Parantha

नाश्ता*

I've always thought of "nashta" as breakfast, so it feels weird to put some of these dishes in this section, though I want to translate it more like "snacks" here. It's still a bit of a wide-ranging group, including everything from Patra to Pav Bhaji, but I think this is the name that makes the most sense. Almost everything in this section is deep-fried and would be perfect with chai, especially on a cold, rainy, evening.

* Nashta

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ब्रेड पकोड़ा* → makes 6 pakodas

This is sort of an insane recipe. I know I always tell you that bread pakoda is a crazy concept (literally breaded bread) but Nani's version doesn't even have any filling. I understand why this could have been a good breakfast option growing up, as it's cheap, simple, and filling. It actually does work, especially texturally, though I'd still say I probably prefer the version with aloo inside.

- Besan → ½ cup
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Garam masala → ¼ tsp
- Water → 6 tbsp
- Bread → 3 slices, white bread

Mix besan together with the masalas (namak, lal mirch, and garam masala).

you should have a thick batter ← Add the water and mix well.

Cut the bread in half diagonally.

3-5 mins. ← Dip the bread in the batter, and deep fry.

*Bread Pakoda

वेज पकोड़ा* → makes ~15-20 pakodas

Nani said these were your favorite pakodas. You know that my favorite types of pakodas are onion bhaji, but these scratch a similar itch. I really like the way that the thin pieces of onion and carrot get crisp. The consistency of the batter is key here, as it can make or break how crunchy the pakodas get and whether they stay together in the oil. The inclusion of garam masala in the batter also gives these pakodas a sort of sweet, warming undertone.

- Besan → 1 ½ cup
- Namak → 1 ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 ½ tsp
- Garam masala → ½ tsp
- Water → ¾ cup
- Potatoes → 1 medium
- Onion → 1 small
- Carrot → 1 medium
- Cauliflower → ¼ head
- Peas → ½ cup

Mix besan together with the masalas (namak, lal mirch, and garam masala).

Add the water and mix well. ← should be a very thick batter!

Cut the vegetables thinly. ← julienne potatoes & carrots, and thinly slice onions & cauliflower

Add the vegetables to the batter.

Fry small pakodas. ← drop small handfuls of batter into the oil, fry for 5-7 mins.

*Veg Pakoda

पात्रा* → makes 50-60 pieces

These turned out delicious, almost exactly like Nani's. They were also quite fun to make — there's something really satisfying about rolling up these large leaves and seeing how they firm up after steaming. It's a type of technique that doesn't really exist in Western cuisine, and I was really excited to try it out. They're surprisingly forgiving, and, as Nani said, they can take a lot of khattai.

Steaming
- Arbi ke patte (Arbi leaves) → 5-6 leaves
- Besan → 1 ½ cup
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tsp
- Khattai → 1 tsp
- Water → ~¾ cup

Frying
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tsp
- Khattai → 1 tsp
- Mustard oil → 3-4 tbsp
- Hing → 2 puffs
- Jeera → 1 tsp

Steaming

Wash the leaves and cut the stems out.

Mix the besan, masalas (namak, lal mirch, and khattai), and water to make a thick batter.

Spread a thin layer of batter over each leaf, and roll it up tightly.

15-20 min. ← Steam the rolled leaves in a steamer basket with a bit of oil — or in a pressure cooker, take the whistle off and cook until there's steam coming out.

Frying

cut into ½ inch rounds ← Let cool, then cut the steamed leaves into pieces and mix with the masalas (namak, lal mirch, and khattai).

Heat mustard oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

10-15 min. ← Add the steamed pieces and fry until crisp.

*Patra

कलमी वड़ा* → makes 15-20 vadas

If you deep fry anything twice, it'll be good — anyone who's had fast food fries can tell you that. Still, I was skeptical about a vada made solely of chana dal. Somehow, it's actually quite flavorful, and the vadas are perfect for soaking up chutney. I really like the format of these — the thick-cut matchsticks look almost like potato wedges, and the shape ensures the center is cooked through without burning the outside.

- Chana dal → ½ cup
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp

Soak chana dal in water overnight.

Drain and rinse the dal.

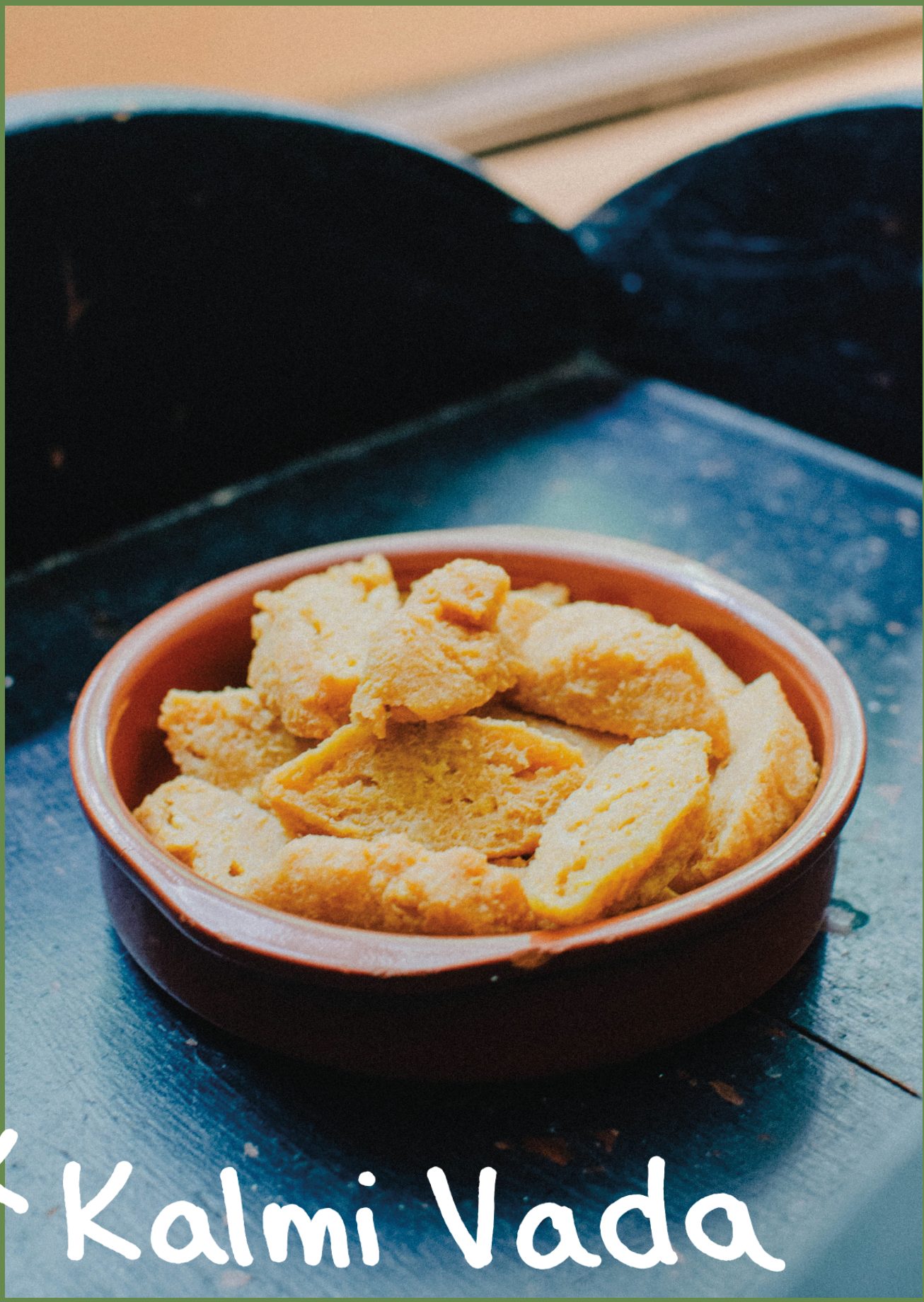
~1 tbsp water ← Blend the dal with namak, lal mirch, and a bit of water, until you get a thick dough.

Shape the dough into thick tikki-style patties.

5-7 mins. ← Deep fry until halfway cooked.

½-inch thick, ~4 per vada ← Cut into thick matchsticks.

5-7 mins. ← Deep fry again until dark brown and crispy.



*Kalmi Vada

पाव भाजी* → makes 5-6 servings

This recipe breaks the mold that almost every other single recipe in this book falls into. Firstly, Nani specifically called for refined oil here, instead of ghee or mustard oil, as are used for the other recipes. Second, this is one of the only recipes with onion in it, and the only one with green bell pepper. This is one of the more involved recipes in the book, but it's worth it — I'm not usually a big pav bhaji fan, but this one works.

Boiled Mixture
- Potatoes → 3-4 medium
- Cauliflower → ½ head
- Carrots → 2 medium
- Peas → ½-1 cup
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp

Bhaji
- Refined oil → 2 tbsp
- Hing → 2 puffs
- Jeera → 1 tsp
- Onion → 1 medium
- Green bell pepper → ½-1
- Tomato → 2-3 medium
- Namak → 2 tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Haldi → ½ tsp
- Pav bhaji masala → 1 tbsp

~¾ inch pieces ← Peel the potatoes, then cut the potatoes, cauliflower, and carrots into medium sized pieces.

10-20 mins. ← Add the potatoes, cauliflower, carrots, and peas to boiling water with the namak and lal mirch until cooked through.

In a kadai, add your oil, then temper with hing and jeera.

~10 mins. ← Finely chop the onion and bell pepper, then add them and saute.

~10 mins. ← Dice the tomatoes and add them, sauteing for a while.

Add the boiled vegetables and the masalas (namak, lal mirch, and and haldi), other than the pav bhaji masala.

just a few splashes of water ← Add water and boil for ~30 minutes, mashing a bit if desired.

Add the pav bhaji masala, and serve with toasted pav buns.

*Pav Bhaji

ब्रेड रोल* → makes 20-30 pieces

*Bread Roll

- Potatoes → 6 medium
- Salt → 2 tsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tsp
- Bread → 1 loaf, white bread

Boil the potatoes and let cool, then peel and mash well.

Add the salt and lal mirch to the mashed potatoes and mix well.

5-7 mins. ← Heat a couple tablespoons of oil in a saucepan, then add the potatoes and saute, then let cool.

cut the crusts off! ← Cut each slice of bread in half lengthwise (to get two long rectangles).

Lightly dip the bread in water, and squeeze gently between your palms to wring it out.

like a twinkie shape ← Put about a tablespoon of the potato mixture in the middle of each bread piece, then fold in half and squeeze between your hands to wrap the bread around the filling.

7-9 min. ← Heat oil in a pot, and deep fry the bread rolls until golden brown.

मठरी* → makes 10-12 matri

*Matri

- Maida → 1 cup
- Suji, fine → 1/4 cup
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Ajwain → 1/2 tsp
- Refined oil → 3 tbsp

Mix together the maida, suji, namak, and ajwain.

Add the oil and mix well, until the dough stays together when you make a fist around it.

~1/4 cup ← Add a little water until you have a hard dough.

Rest for ~30 minutes, covering with a damp cloth.

roll out ~1/8 inch thick ← Divide the dough into small balls, then roll out into circles.

3-5 mins. ← Puncture small holes with a fork or knife, and deep fry until golden brown.

आलू टिक्की* → makes 6-8 tikkis

Matar Masala

- Ghee → 1 tbsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → 1/2 tsp
- Matar → 1 cup
- Namak → 1 1/2 tsp
- Mirch → 1 tsp
- Khattai → 1/2 tsp

Tikki

- Potatoes → 4 medium
- Namak → 2 tsp
- Bread crumbs → 1/4 cup

*Aloo Tikki

Matar Masala

Heat ghee, then temper with hing and jeera.

7-10 mins. ← Add the matar and masalas, and fry until dry and slightly mushy.

Tikki

20-30 mins. ← Boil the potatoes and let them cool, then peel and grate.

Add namak and bread crumbs and mix well.

Take a small ball of the potato mixture, make a bowl in your hand, and fill it with the matar.

10-15 mins. ← Close the ball around the masala, then flatten out into a tikki and fry in ghee until golden brown and crispy.

चाट*

This is the type of food that you are perhaps most well-known for, in our family, your friend groups, and beyond. I know that you've perfected your own recipes (and I personally prefer yours as well), but it might be worthwhile to test out Nani's once in a while. They are all very similar to yours, but there might be something you could recover from the small differences that could help strengthen your own chaat even further.

* Chaat

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मीठी सौंठ* → makes ~2 cups

This is a recipe that you've kept pretty similar to Nani's, though hers is a bit more savory — relying more heavily on kala namak and adding in garam masala. I think its interesting that she specifically told me to get imli with seeds. I don't know whether it's because that's all you used to get or whether the seeds impart their own flavor, but it turned out yummy — perhaps slightly brighter than the one you make, but similar nonetheless.

— Dried imli (tamarind), with seeds → 300 grams
— Gur → ½ cup
— Kala namak → 1 tsp
— Bhuna jeera → ½ tsp
— Garam masala → ½ tsp

15-20 mins, stirring & mushing to infuse the water ← Boil the imli with enough water to cover.

Strain, then boil again with the gur and a bit more water if desired.

boil until gur is dissolved and desired consistency is reached ←

Add kala namak, bhuna jeera, and garam masala.

—

The amount of water depends on how thick or thin you want your chutney — I like it to be a thin glaze consistency.

You can definitely use dried tamarind without seeds, just make sure to account for the weight difference and adjust the recipe accordingly.

*Meethi Saunth

हरी चटनी* → makes ~1 cup

This is a pretty classic green chutney, though I think Nani seems to spice it more heavily than you do. The cumin and coriander seeds add a lot of earthy, nutty notes, and the hing gives it a sort of savory undertone — all of these come together to make a chutney that's less bright than yours is, but a little bit warmer and deeper. Make this a day or two early and keep it in the fridge to let the flavors meld together.

- Dhaniya (cilantro), leaves → 2 bunches
- Hari mirch (green chilies) → 1-2, stems removed
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Hing → 1 puff
- Jeera → ¼ tsp
- Dhaniya, whole seeds → ½ tsp
- Khattai (or imli paani or kaccha aam) → 1 tsp

Wash the cilantro well, and discard any thick stems (thin ones are fine).

Blend all the ingredients together with about 1/4 cup of water.

*Green Chutney

पापड़ी चाट* → makes a big platter

This is sort of a non-recipe recipe. Of course, you don't need any amounts to make papdi chaat, but I struggled to even provide any ranges. Everyone likes their papdi chaat different — some with more dahi, some with more lal mirch, and so on. Even when relaying this recipe to me, Nani said that some people like to soak the papdi in dahi, and some people like to keep them crisp. Either way, it turned out striking and delicious.

- Potatoes → 3-4 medium
- Yogurt → a few cups, or as much as desired
- Meethi saunth → several tbsp, or as much as desired
- Bhuna jeera → a few pinches
- Lal mirch → a few pinches
- Namak → a few pinches
- Papdi → 8-10 oz.

Boil the potatoes and let cool, then peel them and crush them into medium size pieces by hand.

you want hollandaise consistency ← Thin the yogurt out with a little bit of water.

Optionally, you can let the papdi soak in the dahi for a few minutes before serving to soften them.

Arrange the papdi on a plate, and add the potatoes on top.

Spoon the yogurt all over the plate, covering the papdi and potatoes, and then add spoons of meethi saunth over the dahi.

Sprinkle with salt, lal mirch, and bhuna jeera, and serve immediately.

*Papdi Chaat

फ्रूट चाट* → makes 2-3 servings

- Potatoes → 2 medium
- Bananas → 1-2
- Apple → 1
- Pear → 1
- Chaat masala → 1 tsp
- Bhuna jeera → ½ tsp
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Lime → juice of ½
- Meethi saunth, optional → ~⅓ cup
- Dahi → a few tbsps

20-30 mins. ← Boil your potatoes, then cool, peel, and cut into medium pieces.

8-10 mins. ← Saute potatoes in a little oil.

Cut all your fruits into medium pieces.

Mix together all your elements — the fruits, potatoes, masalas, lime juice, dahi, and meethi saunth, if using.

*Fruit Chaat

गोलगप्पे पानी* → makes 4-5 cups

- Dhaniya leaves (cilantro) → 1 bunch
- Pudina (mint) → 1 bunch
- Hari mirch (green chilies) → 3-4, stems removed
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Hing → 1-2 puffs
- Jeera → 1 tsp
- Imli paani → ~½ cup
- Pani puri masala → 1 tsp
- Bhuna jeera → ½ tsp
- Kala namak → 1 tsp

Blend the dhaniya and pudina with hari mirch, namak, hing, and jeera. ← add a bit water to blend, if necessary

Add strained imli paani, pani puri masala, bhuna jeera, and kala namak.

Thin out with water, as desired. ← 2-4+ cups, depending on how strong you like it

*Golgappe Paani

साथ में*

Nani has always loved her condiments. From adding soy sauce and vinegar into her Maggi to her ketchup and green chutney concoction, she will never eat a plain meal. These recipes, especially Nimbu Achar and Aam Ki Launji, are perhaps the ones I associate most strongly with Nani. Achar also represents a set of techniques that are unique to Indian cooking — something between curing, pickling, and fermenting — and I appreciated the opportunity to give them a chance. Chefs love to say that "time is flavor", and these recipes certainly exemplify that.

* Saath Mein

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Aam Ki Launji 88
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Chaaj 89

मिक्स वेज अचार* → makes 1 pint

Nani said this used to be your achaar of choice. I guess you've always enjoyed a kitchen-sink vegetable recipe, in any format. This feels a little bit like an achaar version of giardiniera (another mixed vegetable condiment you like), where the focus is more on the vegetables than it is on the masala. It's not the type of achaar I'd generally spring for, but it's surprisingly complex and tangy.

- Carrot → 1-2 medium
- Cauliflower → 1/4 head
- Turnip → 1-2 small
- Peas → 1/4 cup
- Namak → 1 tbsp
- Lal mirch → 1 tbsp
- Haldi → 1/2 tsp
- Rai, powdered → 1 tsp
- Mustard oil → ~1/2 cup

peel & thinly slice carrot & turnip, break cauliflower into small florets ←

Wash and peel your vegetables, then cut into small pieces.

Optionally, blanch your vegetables to soften.

Dry your vegetables well in sunlight for 1-2 days.

Heat the mustard oil until it begins to smoke, and then let cool.

make sure vegetables are fully covered by oil ←

Add the vegetables and spices to your jar or container, and then pour the oil overtop.

taste after 7 days ←

Let it sit in a sunny spot for 7-10 days.

—

If you're worried about spoilage, add the juice of 1/2 a lime to the jar.

*Mix Veg Achar

नींबू अचार* → makes 1 pint

Nimbu Achaar is a Nani classic, so I had to make this one — even if it took me more than three months to test. This is the only achaar that I'd consider a "pickle", since it's acid-based, rather than oil-based. This came out quite intense, even as far as achaar goes, especially since I tasted it by eating a whole quarter of a lime. I wouldn't recommend doing that, but it is delicious in normal quantities.

- Limes → 8 (4 cut, 4 juiced)
- Namak → 3 tbsp
- Ajwain → 1 tsp
- Garam masala → 1 tsp
- Ginger → 1-2 inches
- Gur → ~1/3 cup

Wash the limes, and dry well.

Cut half the limes into small wedges. then squeeze the juice of the other half.

Peel and thinly julienne the ginger.

Mix everything except the gur, and add to a jar.

Let the jar sit in direct sunlight for 1-2 months, checking occasionally.

you're looking for the limes to have softened ←

Once the limes are soft, add gur.

← if you add gur too early, the limes will take long to soften

*Nimbu Achar

आम पन्ना* → makes 6-8 servings

I had never really had Aam Panna — or at least, I never really gave it a chance — until I made it in Ghana. Moses fell in love with it, and so did I. It's incredibly light and refreshing, and it's amazing how much flavor you can extract from just one mango. Because of the kala namak and bhuna jeera, it leans a bit savory, but the mint balances it out and keeps it feeling fresh and bright.

- Kaccha aam (raw mango) → 1 medium
- Sugar → ~1½ cup
- Kala namak → ½ tsp
- Bhuna jeera → 1 tsp
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Pudina (mint), blended or finely chopped → a handful

cut into large pieces ← Peel and cut the kaccha aam, then boil.

15-20 mins. ← Mash the mango while boiling.

press the pulp to extract its flavor ← Strain the mixture, reserving the liquid.

Add the sugar, masalas and mint to the strained liquid, and serve chilled.

—

You may want to thin it out with cold water, depending on how strong the panna is.

*Aam Panna

हिंग का अचार* → makes 1 pint

- Kaccha aam (raw mango) → 2 medium
- Namak → 2 tbsp
- Lal mirch → 2-3 tsp
- Hing → 3-4 puffs

*Hing Ka Achar

¼-½ inch size ← Peel kaccha aam and cut into small pieces.

Add namak, lal mirch, and hing.

Mix well, and fill into a jar.

depending how sour you want it to be ← Eat immediately, or let sit for ~4 days.

आम की लौंजी* → makes ~1 ½ cups

- Kaccha aam (raw mango) → 2 medium
- Mustard oil → 2 tbsp
- Methidana → ½ tsp
- Hing → 2 puffs
- Namak → ½ tsp
- Green chili → 1-2, chopped finely
- Saunf, powdered → 1 tsp
- Gur → ~⅓ cup

*Aam Ki Launji

Peel the kaccha aam and cut into long wedges.

Heat the mustard oil, and temper with methidana and hing.

Add the kaccha aam, green chili, and masalas (namak and saunf).

add 1-2 tbsp water, and cook for 10-15 mins. ← Mix well, then add a little water and cook until soft.

Finally, add gur and mix well.

कांजी* → makes 3-4 servings

- Kali gajar (black carrots) → 2-3 medium
- Water → ~3-4 cups
- Namak → 1 tsp
- Lal mirch → ½ tsp
- Rai, powdered → 1 tsp

*Kanji

Wash and peel carrots, then cut into matchsticks.

Add to a jar with warm water and the masalas (namak, lal mirch, and rai).

Let sit in a sunny spot for ~2 days. ← or until sour to your liking

चाज* → makes 2-3 servings

- Dahi → 1 cup
- Bhuna jeera → ½-1 tsp
- Namak → ½-1 tsp
- Water → ½-1 cup

*Chaaj

Add masalas to the dahi, and mix well until smooth.

Add water to thin out to your desired consistency and mix well.

मिठाई*

This was a tough section to get through — not because the recipes were difficult or I didn't like them, but because I then had to eat all the mithai that I made. These are not the sweets of the west, with fruits and creams — they are fatty, starchy, and sweet. In fact, most of the recipes in this section rely on those three components: fat, starch, and sugar. They may not seem like a lot when you make them, but they are rich beyond measure.

*Mithai

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खीर* → makes ~6 servings

This one surprised me — of course, it's hard for kheer to turn out bad, but this was truly delicious. I made it for a potluck at the farm, and everyone loved it — one person even said it's the best rice pudding she's ever had. I think that, because of it's simplicity, the ingredients really shine. Using rich, fresh whole milk makes the texture beautifully smooth and creamy, and being intentional about the toppings makes them shine all the more.

- Milk → 6 cups
- Basmati rice → 6 tbsp
- Sugar → 5-6 tbsp
- Kaju, badam, or any other nuts you like, optional → as desired

Rinse the basmati rice, then leave to soak for 10-15 minutes.

Add the milk to a pot and bring to a boil, then add the rice.

Lower the heat and simmer for about an hour (or longer), stirring occasionally, until it reaches the desired thickness.

Add the sugar and simmer for a few more minutes.

Top with nuts, if using.

* kneer

सूजी का हलवा* → makes 2-3 servings

Suji ka halwa, as you know is my favorite type of halwa — especially when its freshly made, still steaming, and spooned into a thin layer on a plate. I don't know if this was one of your favorite types of halwa, but I feel like this is the one that you made the most growing up — maybe because of me. Nani said you can add nuts or kishmish on top, but I like mine totally plain, so that's how I made it here.

- Suji → 1/3 cup
- Ghee → 1/4 cup
- Sugar → 1/3 cup
- Water → 1 1/3 cup
- Badam, kaju, pista, and/or kishmish, optional → as desired

10-12 mins. ← Heat ghee, then add suji and roast until golden brown.

To make the chaasni, heat the water and sugar together until dissolved.

happens quick, 2-3 mins. ← Add chaasni to the roasted suji and bring to a boil, stirring often, until thick.

Top with nuts, if using.

*Suji Ka Halwa

मीठी सेवइयां* → makes 2-3 servings

I hadn't had meethi seviyan in several years until I tested it for this book. I used the hand-rolled seviyan you gave me, and they have a wonderful, slightly bouncy and chewy texture. Of course, you add sugar to it, but even the milk itself starts to smell sweet and aromatic as you cook it down with the seviyan. With only three ingredients, it's basically as simple as you could get, but it's light, delicate, and perfectly sweet.

— Bhunivi seviyan → ½ cup
— Milk → 1½-2 cups
— Sugar → ~⅓ cup

Bring the milk to a boil, then add the seviya.

until seviyan are cooked through & mixture has thickened ← Let simmer for 10-15 minutes.

Add the sugar and mix well.

*Meethi Seviyan

मीठे पारे* → makes 30-40 pieces

Not only were these surprisingly easy to make, but they turned out surprisingly addictive. The thick chaasni hardens into a crunchy glaze that almost feels like you're eating a donut, and the meethe paare puff up, so they're surprisingly light. These are a good thing to make a big batch of, since they keep so well — even weeks later, they're just as crisp and fresh they are on the first day.

Dough
- Maida → 1 cup
- Ghee → 2 tbsp
- Water → 1/4 cup

Chaasni
- Sugar → 1/2 cup
- Water → 1/2 cup

it should feel like wet sand ← Mix maida with melted ghee.

Add water and mix to make a soft dough.

roll out to ~1/8-inch thick ← Roll the dough out, and cut into diamonds.

3-4 mins, until puffed up and crisp ← Deep fry.

it should coat and harden on a spoon in seconds ← To make chaasni, boil water and sugar (in equal parts) until thick.

Add the meethe paare to the chaasni and mix quickly to coat.

*Meethe Paare

पंजीरी* → makes 15-20 pieces

This is such a crazy recipe — it's somewhere between fudge, toffee, laddoo, and chikki. All the other panjiri recipes I saw online were like wet sand, but Nani specifically said to press it onto a plate and let it solidify. Honestly, I have no idea if I made this right, since I couldn't find any reference for it anywhere. You'll have to judge it for yourself, if you can remember how Nani used to make it.

- Atta → ½ cup
- Ghee → ¼ cup
- Kharbooj ke beej (melon seeds) → 1 tbsp
- Sugar → ½ cup
- Water → ¾ cup

8-10 mins. ← Heat ghee, then fry atta and kharbooj ke beej until brown.

10-15 mins., or until it coats the back of a spoon in a thick layer ← In a separate pot, boil the water and sugar until thick and glaze-y.

Add the roasted atta mixture into the sugar water and immediately mix well.

Grease a plate, and spread the mixture on it, pushing it down to compress.

Let it sit for 30 minutes to 1 hour, then cut into pieces.

*Panjiri

गाजर का हलवा* → makes 6-8 servings

*Gajar Ka Halwa

- Carrot → ¾ lb (4-5 medium)
- Milk → 1 ½ lb (~3 cups)
- Sugar → ⅓ - ½ cup
- Khoya → ~2oz., grated
- Kishmish, badam, kaju, and/or elaichi, optional → as desired

grate on small holes of a box grater ← Wash and peel the carrots, then grate.

Heat the milk and grated carrots together, bringing to a boil.

it should be a thick paste ← Simmer for 1 to 1.5 hours.

8-10 mins. ← Add the sugar and grated khoya, mixing well, and fry for a bit.

Top with any nuts or dried fruits you are using.

आलू का हलवा* → makes 3-4 servings

*Aloo Ka Halwa

- Potatoes → 2-3 medium
- Ghee → ¼ cup
- Sugar → ⅓ - ½ cup

20-30 mins. ← Boil potatoes, then let cool.

Peel potatoes, then mash or grate.

15-20 mins. ← Heat ghee, and fry potatoes until lightly brown but soft.

3-5 mins. ← Add sugar and fry a bit longer.

आटा हलवा* → makes 4-6 servings

*Atta Halwa

- Atta → 1/2 cup
- Ghee → 1/2 cup
- Water → 2 cups
- Sugar → 1/2 cup

Heat the ghee, and add atta.

8-10 mins., until medium brown ← Fry the atta well.

Heat water and sugar together (in a 4 to 1 ratio) until the sugar is dissolved.

make sure there are no lumps ← Add the sugar water to the roasted atta, and mix well.

3-5 mins, stirring often ← Boil together until thickened.

आटा लड्डू* → makes 6-8 laddoos

*Atta Laddoo

- Atta → 2/3 cup
- Ghee → 6 tbsp
- Kharbooj ke beej (melon seeds), optional → 2 tbsp
- Boora (powdered sugar) → 4-6 tbsp

Heat the ghee, and add the kharbooj ke beej, if using.

7-10 mins. ← Add the atta and fry until well-roasted.

Remove onto a plate and let cool a bit.

Add the sugar, and mix in well.

Shape into laddoos by hand.

घर का*

This is sort of a non-section section. You can see Bread and Bhujia on the opposite page — I didn't include a recipe for that, but I think you know how to make it. Out of the recipes that I did include, the one for Garam Masala is a real recipe, one that I used for several of the dishes in this book, and the rest... well, you'll see.

*Ghar Ka

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गर्म मसाला* → makes ~⅓ cup

Every family has their own recipe for garam masala, and they can vary wildly, which is why I decided to put it in this section. Nani's recipes rely much more heavily on garam masala than yours, and it's clear to see (smell?) why — her version is beautiful and aromatic, far more floral and sweet than anything you could find at Patel Brothers. It seems like a lot of elaichi, but it's worth it. Then again, I would eat elaichi on anything.

- Laung (cloves) → 2 tsp
- Badi elaichi (black cardamom) → 6-8
- Hari elaichi (green cardamom) → 8-10
- Tej patta (bay leaves) → 6 big
- Jeera (cumin seeds) → 1 tsp
- Kali mirch (black peppercorns) → 2 tsp
- Dalcheeni (cinnamon) → 1 inch
- Jayaphal (nutmeg) → 1-2
- Saunth (dried ginger) → 2 big pieces (or 1½ tsp ginger powder)

Grind all the ingredients together in a spice grinder.

*Garam Masala

एग्ज़ाम का नाश्ता* → makes 1 serving

This is one of your classic snacks. The same way that some college students might survive on coffee and Red Bull during finals, you relied on the potassium, starch, and sugar from this humble fruit to keep you going. I don't see you eating bananas very much anymore — perhaps because you're not taking many exams nowadays. If you do try making this recipe, it may help to be in a state of stress while doing so.

— Banana → 1

Peel and eat the banana.

* Exam Snack

सर्दी का नाश्ता* → makes only 1 serving

This is another one of your recipes, so I'm sure you know it well, but I thought I might as well include it, just in case you forgot. The key to this recipe is two things — timing and attitude. With regards to the first, it is best in the winter — almost like a warm soup or stew. For the latter, it is important to keep a firm disposition, and emphasize the importance of independence.

— Orange → 1
— Kali mirch → a few pinches

Peel the outer skin of the orange, discarding the peels and pith.

Carefully separate the orange into its segments.

Painstakingly peel each segment of the orange.

Top with kali mirch.

Refuse to repeat these steps for your brother, and insist that he does it himself.

* winter Snack

क्रीम बिस्कुट* → makes 4 very specific servings

This recipe is by way of Bobby Mama — I believe he came up with it himself. He hasn't made it in many years (decades, even), but hopefully when you make it and try it, it will remind you of when he used to make it long ago. The best cream biscuits to get are the ones from the seller down the street — choose whichever flavor is new or looks the most exciting to you that day.

— Cream biscuits → 10 biscuits, any flavor (orange, elaichi, etc.)

ensure you have ten! ← Open a package of cream biscuits.

Divide the package into four groups, as follows:

One biscuit, for your dad.

Two biscuits, for your mom.

Three biscuits, for your sister.

Four biscuits, for yourself.

Distribute to the respective family members and enjoy.

*Cream Biscuits

Happy birthday Maa. Everything I wanted to tell you is in the pages of this book, and so there's not much left to say. Our family often has trouble displaying affection — we don't know how to receive gifts, we don't know how to give compliments, and we don't know how to say "I love you". Yet, we've always found our way around it — if we like a gift, we just won't return it. In that same spirit, I won't say any of those things now. I only hope that you'll like this gift. Unfortunately, you can't return this one.

— Sohum

When I come home, I always look forward to the food you make — the dosa, kadhi, bhel puri, and bisi bele bath. The dishes you make are an expression of care, of connection, and a key part of what home means to me. But home is not a stagnant thing, frozen in time and place. It requires effort to maintain, and constant work to rediscover as our lives shift. As we've moved away and come back to the house less often, I have seen the work you've put in to preserve this sense of home despite the distance and limited interaction. And I cannot adequately express how important and meaningful that is. This book is an attempt to hopefully collect and hold on to some fragments of that first version of home for you.

— Saarthak